

LUTZ JÄKEL

Dubai

New Arabian Cuisine



UMSCHAU

DUBAI

– New Arabian Cuisine



Lutz Jäkel
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Thanks to its subtle fusion of the fascinating ingredients and flavours of the Near and Middle East with elements of European haute cuisine, New Arabian Cuisine opens up new and exciting culinary horizons. In the words of German chef, Ingo Maass, *“this novel style of cuisine provides an outstanding opportunity for those lovers of fine food who may be a little hesitant about unfamiliar flavours to acquire a taste for Arabian cuisine”*

- Dubai is currently one of the most popular destinations in the Near and Middle East for tourists from all over the world.
- A selection of over 120 culinary creations by the renowned chefs, Ingo Maass (Germany), Christian Jean (France), Amgad Zaki (Egypt) and Khalil Zakhem (Syria), from the JW Marriott Hotel in Dubai.
- Hors d’oeuvres, entrées, main courses and desserts, snacks, canapés, dips and cocktails, along with “Chef’s Notes” offering useful tips and entertaining short anecdotes.
- A fascinating account of the culinary world of Dubai.
- Rounded off with informative essays and interesting culinary anecdotes.
- This book is part of the ‘star chef campaign’ of Lufthansa’s First and Business Classes.

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Dates, Saffron, Cinnamon, Hammour and other Ingredients

◆ **Saffron** (Arabian, sa'fraan): the dried stigmas of the saffron crocus (*Crocus sativus*); probably first used on Crete and then introduced by Arabs in Andalusia. Saffron has always been the world's most expensive spice, a distinction which it still enjoys today. This is because the stigmas (3 per flower) have to be plucked by hand and, depending on the amount of moisture left after drying, 100,000 to 200,000 of these are required to make 1 kilogram of saffron! The men and women who harvest this precious spice manage to collect about 60 to 80 grams per day, and they need to be alert and work quickly, because this crocus only flowers for a few days and usually only during the first hours of the day. Saffron should be used sparingly, as it can easily add a unwanted bitter flavour to a dish; however, when added in tiny amounts, it can fully unfold its pleasantly astringent aroma in lamb, fish and rice dishes. In large amounts, saffron can have the effect of a narcotic and may even have fatal consequences (from 10 to 12 g)!

Incidentally, saffron is not used in every Arabian country: while it is employed to an almost extravagant degree in Morocco and the Gulf States, it is almost never to be found in the cuisine of Egypt and the Levant. But there is one thing about saffron that applies throughout the Arabian world: it's a lot cheaper there than in Europe. But watch out: saffron on the label doesn't necessarily mean saffron in the sack. Even in Arab countries, this prince of spices isn't sold in bulk. The yellow powder sold in sacks in spice souks is the cheap saffron substitute, safflower (from the thistle-like composite plant, *Carthamus tinctorius*) or turmeric. These, like genuine saffron, are able to add a yellow colouration to food. But that's all. If a spice-seller offers you bags of saffron for the equivalent of just a few pence, it's wise to be sceptical. In Europe, the price of the saffron offered in

Arabian, Iranian or Asian stores is much lower than you'll find in a delicatessen (where you can pay up to £700 for a kilogram of the cheapest variety). You should always buy saffron strands rather than powder, as other spices or ingredients (even meat extract!) might have been added to the powder. The quality of the saffron is also revealed by the following: saffron strands should be dark red in colour, slightly greasy to the touch and not interspersed with yellow saffron strands. The best saffron comes from Morocco and Iran, although Spain offers high quality, too.

◆ **Spice mixtures:** these are very popular in every Arabian country, particularly for use with meat, as well as with fish. Their names include bahar or baharaat (especially in the Near East), hariissa (in Tunisia and Libya; this is more like a paste and is renowned for its fierce spiciness) and ras al-hanuut ('the top of the shop', in Tunisia and Morocco). Another well-known mixture is called zaatar (Near and Middle East), although this name may also denote a particular spice plant (see below in the Glossary). The proportions of the individual ingredients of a particular mixture vary not only from land to land but also from one spice-seller to another. Each has his own recipe which is also his own little secret. And it goes without saying that everyone knows the trader with the best secret. Whatever you may require the mixture for – whether it be for lamb or beef, grilled or fried, for vegetables or couscous or bulgur, stewed or steamed – every spice-seller will be only too happy to prepare precisely the mixture you require. And he'll pile up the individual ingredients, mix them and pack them so quickly and skilfully that you'll hardly have a chance of discovering his secret. As each seller has his own recipe, the flavour is bound to vary.



In the ancient harbor of Dubai, where the Arabic Daus are still built today, the Afghans of Tora Bora earn their livelihood by weaving bow nets.



Marinated Baladiiya Cheese, Meshwiiya Salad and Stuffed Spirals of Bread

Hors d'Oeuvre

Serves 4

Baladiiya cheese

240 g baladiiya cheese (a traditional Arabian cheese; if unavailable, ewe's milk cheese)
15 g spring onions, chopped
10 g zaatar leaves (see Glossary), chopped
60 g black olives, finely chopped
1/2 tsp sesame seeds, roasted
15 ml olive oil
1/2 tsp cumin
salt, pepper

Meshwiiya salad

300 g tomatoes
300 g green peppers
2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
6 g green chillies, finely chopped
olive oil
vinegar
salt, pepper

Bread spirals

100 g mixed sweet peppers, diced small
100 g minced lamb
1 onion, chopped
100 g butter
salt, pepper

Dough

200 g flour
80–100 ml water
1 pinch salt

Wine suggestion:

An Algerian red wine like 'Cuvet de President' or an Algerian rosé like 'Gris d'Algerie'

Dice the baladiiya cheese and marinate it in the mixture of black olives, spring onions, zaatar leaves, olive oil, cumin, salt and pepper. Sprinkle with sesame seeds before serving.

To make the meshwiiya salad, grill the green peppers in a hot oven (meshwiiya is Arabic for 'grilled'), remove the skin and seeds and then chop coarsely. Blanch, skin and seed the tomatoes before dicing. Sauté the peppers and tomatoes along with the garlic and chillies in a little olive oil for a few minutes, remove from the heat and allow to cool. Add vinegar, oil, salt and pepper to taste and leave to stand for a few minutes.

To make the bread spirals, mix the flour, salt and water until the dough is smooth and soft, and then allow it to rest for a few minutes. Meanwhile, lightly sauté the mixed peppers with the minced lamb and onion in half of the butter and then season with salt and pepper. Roll out the dough thinly and brush on the rest of the (melted) butter. Spread the pepper and lamb filling on the dough, roll it up tightly and place in the fridge. Before serving, cut the roll into fairly thin slices and fry both sides of these in olive oil until golden brown.



Chef's Note:

"Olives are a very popular feature of both Mediterranean and Arabian cuisine. On markets, you can always find a vast selection of the most diverse sorts of olives that may be prepared in a broad variety of marinades, some of which can be accordingly expensive. But, when making a fresh salad, olives are a crucially important ingredient, so that using

varieties preserved in tins or jars can easily undermine the subtle flavours of what would otherwise be a delicious salad. So, don't be too careful with your dirhams or pence when purchasing olives! There are a number of people who claim that they don't like olives. However, I firmly believe that anyone who takes the trouble to begin

exploring the apparently inexhaustible range of olives on offer will acquire the taste sooner or later. The nice thing about buying fresh olives is also the fact that you can always try them for free – so it doesn't take long to find out which is your own personal favourite".



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